NCA
VOC FOR IOP/FN
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JOHN ROBERTS/NAIROBI

NEW NAIROBI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

ANNCR:

IN KENYA, WORK CREWS ARE PUTTING THE FINISHING TOUCHES ON AFRICA'S NEWEST AND MOST MODERN AIRPORT. VOA CORRESPONDENT JOHN ROBERTS RECENTLY VISITED THE NEW NAIROBI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AND HE HAS THIS BACKGROUND REPORT:

VOICE:

IT'S AN IMPRESSIVE SIGHT. FROM THE TOP OF THE FIFTY FIVE METER CONTROL TOWER OF THE BRAND NEW NAIROBI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT A VISITOR ON A CLEAR DAY CAN SEE MOUNT KILIMANJARO AND MOUNT KENYA OFF IN THE DISTANCE. BELOW, THE OLD AND THE NEW AIRPORTS, LAY ON OPPOSITE SIDES OF THE LANDING FIELD. THE NEW BUILDING CONSISTS OF A HUGE SEMI-CIRCULAR STRUCTURE FOUR HUNDRED METERS LONG AND A FIVE STORY BUILDING. THE FIRST IS THE NEW ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE FACILITY, WHICH CAN HANDLE TEN JUMBO JETS AT THE SAME TIME, OR A TOTAL FLOW OF TWENTY FIVE HUNDREND PASSENGERS EACH HOUR.

DEPARTING PASSENGERS ARE GUIDED ALONG A DOUBLE LANE APPROACH HIGHWAY TO THEIR PROPER GATE BY ELECTRONIC SIGN POSTS ANNOUNCING FLIGHT NUMBERS AND OTHER INFORMATION. UNIQUE TO BLACK AFRICA ARE FOUR SO-CALLED AIR BRIDGES--SELF PROPELLED ENCLOSED CORRIDORS WHICH EXTEND OUTWARD FROM THE ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE BAY AND CLAMP ON TO THE SIDE OF THE AIRPLANE. PASSENGERS MAY THUS SHUTTLE BETWEEN THE PLANES AND THE TERMINAL BUILDING WITHOUT EVER DESCENDING TO THE RUNWAY ITSELF.

THE NEW NAIROBI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, COSTING A TOTAL OF SIXTY FIVE MILLION DOLLARS, WILL CERTAINLY BE THE BIGGEST AND MOST

MODERN FACILITY IN BLACK AFRICA. PLANNING FOR THE NEW AIRPORT BEGAN IN NINETEEN SIXTY EIGHT, WHEN IT WAS RECOGNIZED THAT THE EXISTING FACILITY WOULD SOON BE INADEQUATE TO HANDLE THE INCREASING AMOUNT OF TOURIST AND CONVENTION GOERS ATTRACTED TO KENYA BY ITS WORLD FAMOUS GAME PRESERVES AND ITS AGREEABLE CLIMATE.

THE WORLD BANK LOANED NEARLY THIRTY MILLION DOLLARS FOR THE PROJECT, THE REST WAS PUT UP BY THE KENYA GOVERNMENT. CARE WAS TAKEN DURING CONSTRUCTION TO USE AS MUCH LOCAL MATERIALS AND PRODUCTS AS POSSIBLE, ACCOUNTING FOR AN ESTIMATED THIRTY PERCENT OF THE TOTAL. IT WAS ALSO DECIDED TO HOLD BACK ON SOME TYPES OF AUTOMATED SERVICES IN ORDER TO PRESERVE LOCAL JOBS.

AS IMPRESSIVE AS THE NEW AIRPORT IS, IT MAY BE JUST THE BEGINNING OF AN EVEN LARGER AIRPORT COMPLEX. THERE IS A MASTER PLAN WHICH CALLS FOR ANOTHER LANDING FIELD AND THREE MORE ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE FACILITIES EXACTLY LIKE THE ONE JUST BEING COMPLETED. THE GOVERNMENT HAS ALREADY ACQUIRED THE LAND, AND ITS READY TO EXPAND AGAIN IN THE MID-NINETEEN NINETIFS IF THE DEMAND IS THERE.

THE NEW INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT ITSELF WILL BE ABLE TO SERVE ONE AND ONE HALF MILLION PEOPLE A YEAR, AND TWICE THAT NUMBER IF THE PRESENT FACILITIES ARE EXPANDED BY SIMPLY ADDING ON. THE MORE THAN FOUR THOUSAND METER RUNWAY CAN HANDLE ANY AIRCRAFT FLYING TODAY, INCLUDING THE ANGLO-FRENCH CONCORDE. THE OPENING OF THE NEW AIRPORT IS CERTAIN TO BE WELCOMED HEARTILY BY THE THIRTY INTERNATIONAL AIRLINES THAT SERVE NAIROBI, BECAUSE AS ONE AIRPORT OFFICIAL SAID, IT'S NO EXAGGERATION TO SAY THAT IT'S THE BEST AIRPORT IN AFRICA.

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